

# Romania: Origin, Destination and Tranzit Area for Trafficking in Human Beings

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**Abstract.** This study aims to realize a better understanding of the aspects that define trafficking in human beings in Romania, in particular through analyzing the indicators concerning the transport of the victims. The phenomenon has been registered a great dynamic over the last ten years and is considering the setting up of networks in several countries for the purpose of exploitation of women, children or immigrants by prostitution, begging, theft or forced labour. In the last period, the techniques of recruitment, transportation and exploitation of the victims have been in a permanent process of change and increasingly becoming more subtle and harder to identify by the enforcement authorities. In this respect, we consider the trafficking in human beings is a significant threat to economic and social development, therefore preventing the emergence of these illegal markets requires an improvement in the management of the migratory flows.

**Keywords:** human trafficking, transport, trafficking routes, Romanian illegal markets.

## 1. Introduction

Transport involves the movement of a victim by traffickers or intermediaries from the place of recruitment to the destination place, where the victim will be exploited. During transport the victims are usually well treated, with food and accommodation, having the possibility to contact their families [1].

According to literature [2], there are three main groups of actors operating on this illegal markets, namely: major criminal groups, medium-sized traffic networks and individuals acting on their own.

*Major criminal groups* have a single command structure (an individual or a family) that controls the illegal transnational activities carried out by the organized crime cells, operating as a whole at all stages of trafficking. These groups have significant logistical resources, such as the modern transport means, the equipment for forging documents, financial availability and access to the illegal border crossing routes.

*Medium-sized traffic networks* are the organized crime structures which interact on different segments of the trafficking process, acting independently, unlike the cells that make up the major criminal groups. This is a working relationship where the operations are carried out in certain regions (for instance, in the border areas) the networks being specialized on recruitment, transport or the exploitation of the victims. These groups have a low degree of professionalism when compared to major criminal groups operating internationally and they are usually limited to one trafficking stage.

*Persons acting as trafckers without being part of an organized crime network* – they are usually involved in the recruitment stage and occasionally in migrants smuggling at the border regions.

## 2. Trafficking in human beings in Romania

### 2.1. Romania as a country of destination for the victims of trafficking in human beings

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According to the international reports [3], Romania is a country of origin, transit and destination for men, women and children trafficked for the purpose of forced labour and for women and children trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Romania is *country of destination* for a small number of women from Colombia, the Republic of Moldova and France, trafficked for the purposes of forced prostitution, as well as for the men from Honduras, trafficked for the purpose of forced labor.

Men, women and children from Romania are trafficked on the national territory for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour, including forced begging and theft [4].

## **2.2. Romania as a country of origin and transit for trafficking in human beings**

These illegal markets have particularly emerged in the areas affected by economic crisis, characterized by low standard of living and the lack of jobs. The origin of human trafficking victims has suffered major changes from 2005 to 2011. Thus, in 2005, the most cases of human trafficking were recorded in Southeast area, in the counties of Constanta, Tulcea, Braila, Galati, Buzau, Vrancea, in Moldova and in the south of Wallachia, especially in Prahova, Dambovita, Giurgiu, Ialomita, Teleorman and Arges. The existing data were also supported by the Amnesty International report [5], which highlighted the high number of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation originated from the poor families of Roma community, in Braila.

According to data provided by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons, in the first six months of 2010, the main sources of human trafficking were the counties located in the West and North-West of Romania. Thus, the counties of Timis, Bihor, Satu Mare, Bistrita-Nasaud and Maramures have accounted for 158 victims, representing 42% of the trafficked persons [6]. In the first six months of 2011, the number of identified victims has significantly increased especially, in the South-East area of the country. Thus, in Iasi, were registered most of the human trafficking cases, while in Hunedoara and Ilfov the responsible authorities identified a small number of victims.

Depending on destination, we can speak of domestic or external traffic. In the case of external traffic, the organized crime networks have to make the necessary arrangements for a successful operation (for instance, providing travel documents, information on persons who have responsibilities for border control , bribing the officials) [7].

*The domestic traffic* consists in exploitation of the Romanian victims within the internal borders. The phenomenon has seen an upward trend, in the first six months of 2010, when 34% of the identified persons were victims of the domestic traffic, positioning Romania on the first place among destination countries. Last year, for the same interval, Romania was ranked on the second place[8]. The share of 34% representing the domestic traffic victims was maintained even in 2011. Thus, Arad, Constanta and Arges counties functioned mainly as areas of exploitation for the internal trafficking victims originated from these counties or transported from other counties. Bacau can be characterized, in a lesser extent, as a county source, while in Bihor, the number of victims originated from this county was the same as the number of exploited persons [9].

*The external traffic*-In the first six months of 2011, the share of victims trafficked across the Romanian borders was 66% of the total number of identified victims and the main destination countries of trafficking in persons were the EU Member States [10]. Thus, according to a recent report of the U.S. State Department [11], men, women and children are trafficked from Romania to Spain, Italy, Czech Republic, Greece, Finland, Israel, Germany, Slovenia, United Kingdom, Cyprus, Australia, France, Belgium and the United States for forced labor in agriculture and industry, as well as for forced begging. A significant number of Romanian children forced to beg in the Western European countries are victims of Roma origin.

For sexual exploitation, men, women and children are trafficked from Romania to Italy, Sweden, Spain, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Greece, Germany, Cyprus, Austria and France. According to experts, the criminal groups in Romania, consisting of Roma community members, have operated in various countries in Europe. Most of the Romanian identified victims are trafficked for forced labor, including forced begging. Lately, there was an increasing trend concerning the number of Romanian boys trafficked for sexual exploitation [12]. In the year 2010, the external traffic found a significant representation among the

Romanian victims trafficked across borders, on top of the destinations been placed Italy and Spain with 66 trafficked victims, followed by Czech Republic with 31 victims, as well as Germany and Greece with 24 victims [13]. In 2011, according to data provided by the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons, it has been recorded an upward trend, with 91 identified victims in Spain, 62 in Germany, 52 in Italy and 34 in the Czech Republic, as shown in table below.

Table 1 - Countries of destination for the Romanian victims in the first six months of 2011

| Destination countries | The number of identified victims |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Spain                 | 91                               |
| Germany               | 62                               |
| Italy                 | 52                               |
| Czech Republic        | 34                               |
| Greece                | 24                               |
| France                | 18                               |
| United Kingdom        | 13                               |
| Cyprus                | 9                                |
| Poland                | 7                                |
| Austria               | 5                                |
| Netherlands           | 4                                |
| Switzerland           | 4                                |
| Belgium               | 2                                |
| Hungary               | 1                                |
| Slovenia              | 1                                |
| Lithuania             | 1                                |

Source: Table adapted from the National Agency against Trafficking in Persons, Research and Public Information Center, *Analysis on the situation of victims identified in the first six months of 2011*, p. 11.

Considering Romania, there were three main routes of trafficking in persons highlighted in the literature [14]:

- *Central route* - from Romania to Central European states, Austria and northern Italy;
- *Central Balkan route* - from the Caucasian states, Eastern Europe, central part of the Balkan Peninsula, through Hungary and the rest of the EU countries;
- *Southern Balkan Route* - from the Caucasian area, South-East Europe through Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania, Italy or Greece and the rest of the EU countries.

The interest, of the organized crime networks for the Western European states as final destinations for trafficking in human beings was felt especially in the recent years. At the beginning of this decade, the vast majority of the victims were trafficked mainly in the Western Balkans because of the existence of a significant market created by the military presence [15]. The current trend is driven by several factors among which may be mentioned [16]:

- the profit made by investing in this business in a Western European country is higher than the profit raised on the Balkans sex markets;
- the programs implemented by the OSCE, EU and U.S.A. concerning the discipline of military troops in the Balkans region, had a significant impact on the local sex market.

External traffic is organized by the trafficking networks supported by the transport agencies in order the victims cross the borders legally. If victims do not have the necessary documents for travel or do not meet legal requirements, traffickers use various ways to create the appearance of a legal travel, as follows [17]:

- *Crossing borders illegally* - it is a method used mainly by the persons who have committed crimes and are pursued by the authorities or by those who organize illegal migrants groups. Illegal migrants entering Romania from the Southern border, make a stop in Bucharest and then follow the route to the West, crossing the western border of the country;

- *Avoiding border controls* – consists in hiding people in different compartments of the vehicles when crossing the borders;
- *The use of false documents* - the use of passports, false insurance when crossing the borders as well as using false invitations or labor contracts for obtaining visas;
- *False statements regarding the visit* – the operation method is possible only with the complicity and support of the travel agencies or the international transport companies that provide migrants the necessary funds to demonstrate their tourism purposes in front of the authorities;
- *The emotional method* - the victim is convinced by her boyfriend to go abroad to start a new life together. This is just a false promise because once they arrive in the destination country the victim will be sold to trafficking networks for sexual exploitation

### 3. Conclusions

Human trafficking is a significant threat to economic and social development and national security interests, therefore preventing the emergence of these illegal markets requires an improvement in the management of migratory flows.

We appreciate that in order to prevent all the forms of human trafficking shall be implemented the information campaigns on legal migration opportunities, as well as improving cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination that will lead to strengthening the border controls, Visas policies and the legislation concerning the trafficking in human beings

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